


# EXHIBIT 12

## Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani at a Signing Ceremony and Joint Press Availability for the U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue

 [state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-qatari-deputy-prime-minister-and-minister-of-foreign-affairs-mohammed-bin-abdulrahman-al-thani-at-a-signing-ceremony-and-joint-press-availability-for-the-u-s-qatar-str/](https://state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-qatari-deputy-prime-minister-and-minister-of-foreign-affairs-mohammed-bin-abdulrahman-al-thani-at-a-signing-ceremony-and-joint-press-availability-for-the-u-s-qatar-str/)



**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** Thank you. It is a great pleasure to welcome my friend, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Al-Thani, here to Washington, and all members of the Qatari delegation. We're opening the fourth Qatar-U.S. Strategic Dialogue, and great appreciation to all of our colleagues for the work that's already gone into this, and the work that is going to go into this in the hours ahead.

I think if you look, Mohammed, at the diversity of issues that we'll cover, it reflects a powerful reality, which is the growing strength of the relationship between the United States and Qatar, spanning shared security and economic interests, cooperation on many regional challenges, and growing people-to-people ties, among other things.

The events in Afghanistan over the past several months have reinforced that partnership, including on the most sensitive and urgent issues. I had the opportunity to thank Amir Tamim in person for Qatar's extraordinary generosity, support, and cooperation when I traveled to Doha in September and witnessed firsthand the massive joint operation to

evacuate Americans, foreign nationals, and Afghans who were our partners over our 20-year mission in Afghanistan. Of the more than 124,000 people evacuated from Afghanistan in August, roughly half transited through Qatar. And that work continues.

Since that time, Qatar has facilitated and funded an additional 15 flights and counting out of Afghanistan, enabling hundreds of U.S. citizens, thousands of others to leave the country. And the government and Qatar Airways continue to support charter flights out of Afghanistan for U.S. Special Immigrant Visa holders and others.

On that note, I can confirm that as of November 10th, all U.S. citizens who have requested assistance from the United States Government to depart Afghanistan and who have – we have identified as prepared to depart and having the necessary travel documents have been offered an opportunity to do so. That includes more than 300 – 380, excuse me – American citizens, and more than 280 legal permanent residents whose departure we have already facilitated.

Meanwhile, Qatar's support for operations at the airport in Kabul have allowed humanitarian assistance from the international community to flow into Afghanistan, including several flights from the World Health Organization carrying lifesaving medical supplies for over 2 million Afghans.

Today, we're signing two new agreements that reflect our deepening collaboration on Afghanistan. The first establishes Qatar as the United States' protecting power in Afghanistan. Qatar will establish a U.S. interests section within its embassy in Afghanistan to provide certain consular services and monitor the condition and security of U.S. diplomatic facilities in Afghanistan.

The second agreement formalizes our partnership with Qatar to facilitate the travel of Afghans with U.S. Special Immigrant Visas – a role that it's already been playing in many instances – and serve as a transit point for eligible Afghans as they complete their application process.

Mohammed, let me again say how grateful we are for your leadership, your support on Afghanistan, but also to note that our partnership is much broader than that, and that's reflected in the very good conversation that we just had, the regular conversations that we have on many issues of common concern in the region and beyond.

Qatar is a crucial partner in promoting regional stability, not only hosting U.S. troops who provide security across the region but also providing significant economic and humanitarian assistance to people in dire situations. Over the last decade, Qatar has donated more than \$1.3 billion in aid to Palestinians in Gaza and provided considerable support to the Yemeni people, including \$100 million pledged in August and another 90 million the Emir donated just this week through the World Food Program.

We're also working together on challenging issues like labor rights. We stand ready to support Qatar in ensuring the full implementation of its labor reforms, including ensuring that all workers in the country are covered by the new minimum wage law, and are able to change employers and leave the country without certificates and permits.

So we're now preparing to mark the 30<sup>th</sup>[j] anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our nations, and I think it's fair to say that the Qatar-U.S. relationship has never been stronger, and we believe it will only grow deeper and more diverse to the benefit of our people and so many others.

And with that, over to you, Foreign Minister Al-Thani, Mohammed.

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AL-THANI:** Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Good morning, everybody. First of all, thank you for the hospitality and warm welcome, Tony. I wish also to thank both delegations for their work and efforts in preparing this dialogue. The fourth Qatar-U.S. Strategic Dialogue represents another milestone in our historically strong partnership – the flourishing ties between our two countries enabled by the mutual commitments of our two governments demonstrated not only by wide scope of our cooperation but also by the deep friendship between our nations.

We are partners in defense, security, investments, education, and energy. And we are global leaders in the fight against terrorism. This is possible because our friendship spans decades across institutions.

This year, our friendship became even closer when Qatar worked closely with the United States and our international partners around the clock to evacuate more than 60,000 individuals from Afghanistan, including American citizens, female students from across the country, Afghan employees and their families, and journalists from around the world. Qatar was honored to be in a trusted position to step up and rescue so many people, and we will continue to be an instrument of peace and stability in the region.

There is still much to be done in Afghanistan, and Qatar remains committed to continue the necessary work alongside with the United States and partners around the world.

We are dedicated to contributing to the stability of Afghanistan and the safety and well-being of the Afghan people. The Strategic Dialogue today will discuss issues of mutual interest and will reaffirm our determination to deepen our cooperation in various fields, including strengthening our defense and security partnership.

Another pillar of our relationship is our commercial partnership. Qatar has invested hundreds of billions of dollars in the U.S. economy. These investments translates into tens of thousands of job across the U.S., and our economic partnership exceeded \$200 billion of trade and investments between our two countries.

As the leading producer of natural gas, Qatar serves an important role in helping countries meet their energy needs while firmly believing in the importance of emission reduction measures through our global investments and green innovation and technologies alongside the Qatar environmental strategy. Our investments reflect our commitment to care for environment. As of 2021, more than half of Qatar Investment Authority investments in power generation projects are zero emissions.

Mr. Secretary, I am grateful for our discussion today and for all your efforts. I look forward to expanding this extraordinary partnership. Today our two nations are connected by deep political, cultural, military, and financial bonds, and I believe our greatest opportunities are still ahead of us.

The year 2022 will be a special one. It marks the 50th anniversary of our alliances between the United States and Qatar, and in November of next year Qatar will host the FIFA World Cup, which will be the first carbon-neutral FIFA World Cup. This year we also celebrate Qatar-U.S. Year of Culture, which contain a number of events celebrating our long friendly relationship across the years.

I look forward welcoming you and your team in Doha for the fifth Strategic Dialogue, and I personally invite you to watch the World Cup match together. So this is a good excuse for you to come to Doha, and I wish your U.S. team the best of luck tonight in Cincinnati, so you will visit us in Doha to watch it again there then. Thank you.

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** That's a hard invitation to say no to. Thank you. (Laughter.)

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY ALLEN:** We'll now move to take questions from the media, the first question going to Humeyra Pamuk from Reuters.

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** The signing.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY ALLEN:** Oh, sorry. (Laughter.)

(The Strategic Dialogue agreements were signed.)

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY ALLEN:** The signing is complete. Over to Humeyra from Reuters.

**QUESTION:** Good morning, Secretary Blinken, Sheikh Thani.

Secretary Blinken, I'd like to start with you. I have a couple of questions. You've already warned about the unusual Russian troop buildup in Ukrainian border. How imminent does the United States see a potential invasion of Ukraine by Russia? What will Washington do?

On Belarus, its neighbors say the crisis is escalating towards a potential military clash. Will the United States join EU in sanctioning Belarus? And given Lukashenka is already sanctioned, why do you think it's going to work this time?

Very quickly on China ahead of Biden-Xi summit, U.S. and China worked together in Glasgow, but how will U.S. balance out cooperation with the obligation to call out on China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang?

And Sheikh Thani, if I may – and Secretary Blinken, please feel free to chime in as well on this one. Sheikh Thani, you've called for more engagement with the Taliban to avoid the looming humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan. How unified are you with the United States in your approach? In that context, do you think the UN should consider delisting Taliban from sanctions regime? Thank you.

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** Thanks very much. I'm happy to start, Mohammed, and then kick it over to you.

On Russia, as I said the other day, we're very concerned about some of the irregular movements of forces that we see on Ukraine's borders. I can't speak to Russia's intentions. We don't know what they are. But we do know that we've seen in the past Russia amass forces on Ukraine's borders, claim some kind of provocation by Ukraine, and then invade – basically following through on something they were planning all along. That's what they did in 2014, and so this raises real concerns about an effort to repeat what was done then, which, as I said the other day, would be a serious mistake.

We're in very close consultation with European allies and partners on this. We, of course, had the Ukrainians here this week and talked about this. But I can't tell you what's in the mind of President Putin, what his intentions are. I can just say that based on the past we have real concerns about what we're seeing in the present, and it would be a serious mistake for Russia to engage in a repeat of what it did in 2014.

There is a process agreed by both Ukraine and Russia, the Minsk process, that continues to offer, I think, the possibility of resolving the differences and ending the occupation of parts of Ukraine. And we would hope as well that the parties would recommit to that and take the necessary steps to make that real. But what is, as I said, of real concern are some of the movements that we're seeing, especially given what Russia has done in the past.

With regard to Belarus, again, as I said the other day, we are also very concerned about the efforts by Belarus to use migration as a political weapon. I'm not going to preview or get ahead of any possible sanctions, but we are looking at various tools that we have. And of course, this is broader than the effort to use migration as a political weapon. It goes to the



conduct of the Lukashenka regime in Belarus in denying the citizens of Belarus the democracy to which they're entitled. And there again, we're in very close consultation with European allies and partners on this as well.

And then finally with regard to China. Look, I will let, of course, the President speak for the administration. We've noted repeatedly over the past 10 months that the relationship with China is among the most consequential and also most complex that we have. As we've said, it has different elements in it – some cooperative, some competitive, and others adversarial – and we will manage all three at the same time. I think you'll see in the engagements the President's already had with President Xi and the engagements to come the work that we're doing to do that.

I think there are issues like climate that in a sense are incumbent on every country in the international community to meet its responsibilities irrespective of differences, even profound differences we have in other areas simply because it's in the interest of each of these countries, including China, and it's in the interest of humanity. And we've seen some progress coming out of COP26 when it comes to China meeting its responsibilities on climate change. A lot more to be done, but this is profoundly in the interest of China's citizens as well as citizens around the world. And irrespective of any other differences, including very strongly felt principles that we will continue to stand for, I think we can still expect to see countries meet their responsibilities, including China.

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AL-THANI:** Well, regarding your question about Afghanistan and the engaging with Taliban, our number one priority in Qatar is to make sure that the humanitarian assistance reaching the Afghan people, especially we are seeing the people suffering from this – they have a dire need for help, especially when the winter is coming, and there will be a lot of challenges in the humanitarian situation, and it's better for us to help the Afghan people over there now before things get much worse.

So the first priority to be addressed with the Taliban is to provide this safe access for humanitarian assistance and ensuring that goes to the right people and not falling into the wrong hands.

The second thing. We believe that abandoning Afghanistan will be a big mistake, and ignoring it, because isolation has never been an answer for or a solution for any issue, and engagement is the only way forward. So that's why we believe engaging with Taliban since they are in power right now is very important for us to ensure that our facilitation for humanitarian assistance is moving smoothly, and also encouraging them and urging them all the time to stand up to their commitments and their pledges for the international community.

Now, we are in continuous consultation with the U.S. We have an agreement on wide range of issues when it comes to Afghanistan and the way to address the situation, and both of us, we agree on the needs of the Afghan people to be – to ensure their safety and to protect

them from – whether from any violence or any act by the people who are in power now, and also ensuring that the humanitarian situation – their humanitarian situation is addressed.

Regarding un-listing the Taliban from the sanctions list, this is – was not Qatar decision. This is a Security Council resolution which had this reason at that time. We believe that the members of the Security Council are in continuous review for this, and this will be – they would be unlisted only by their own decisions. So Qatar has no – any role in this. We are encouraging the international community to keep engaging with Afghanistan, not to abandoning Afghanistan, engaging with everyone over there and preventing any risks from – emerging from Afghanistan.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY ALLEN:** Next question from Ahmed Alhazeem from Al Jazeera.

**QUESTION:** I have two questions for Sheikh Thani and one question for Secretary Blinken. Regarding Afghanistan, Sheikh, you said you have – there is a lot of areas that need urgent need for the Afghan people, and I just want to ask you which certain area Qatar feels that she can play a role, especially in the areas that the conditions of the international community to be – for Taliban to – for behavioral changes to be accepted internationally? And my second question is: Is Qatar looking for a mediator role in Ethiopia?

For Secretary Blinken, regarding Lebanon and the reforms needed from the international community and the pressure placed on the government there, does the United States see any progress happening? What did you reach with your talk with the Lebanese Government?

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** And I apologize because I had a little trouble hearing. Could you just repeat that, the question? Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Regarding reforms in Lebanon, the United States have been pushing the new government to implement these reforms. Do you hear anything from them? Any updates? Any progress?

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AL-THANI:** Well, as we mentioned, we have seen an urgent humanitarian need in Afghanistan for the Afghan people, and basically we believe that these needs translate into food supplies, medicine – health care services needs remain running – and also the schools needs to remain operational. So we are very much focused on those areas and trying to deliver those aids for the right people over there. And as I mentioned, winter is going to be very challenging in delivering those humanitarian aid, so that's why we are urging and encouraging all international organizations to step up this time and to try to deliver it as soon as possible. And from our side, as Qatar, we are trying our best to facilitate for them and to contribute to address those needs.



Regarding Ethiopia, of course, we are very much concerned about the escalation over there in Ethiopia. The stability of Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa is very important for our regional stability, and we hope that things going to be de-escalated and resolved as soon as possible. We normally, Qatar, when it's playing a mediator role, we always been asked by the two parties of the conflict and with their consent, but as far as this conflict concerned, no one has reached out to Qatar. But we are happy to help and to support any international efforts in de-escalating the situation over there and I believe there are a number of countries within the international community, including the United States, are working on these efforts. And we are very much willing to support their efforts in that.

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** First, I appreciate the balance of two questions for Mohammad and one for me. That's the appropriate balance. So thank you.

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AL-THANI:** (Inaudible). (Laughter.)

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** So first, on Lebanon, let me simply say two things. First, there is I think a dire need that the Lebanese people have that needs to be addressed. We are working, as you know, on arrangements to get fuel into the country. Its absence, of course, has had very detrimental effects on the ability to do the most basic things that citizens are looking for, including keeping the hospitals up and running, among transportation, many other things. So we're working on that. I think the prime minister has a good plan for moving Lebanon forward, trying to move the economy forward, in the first instance pursuing work with the international financial institutions and the support that they can offer. At the same time, we're looking to ensure support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, who are a source of stability in the country.

And in all of these areas, I think it would be very important for the various friends and supporters of Lebanon to demonstrate that support, to bolster Lebanon in a time of need, to give it an opportunity to move forward on the program that the prime minister is putting in place to address the urgent economic challenges, and then ultimately to have greater stability and a stronger economic foundation going forward. And that's what we're in conversations about with many friends and partners, and something that we talked about just a few moments ago. Thank you.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY ALLEN:** Our last question from Ben Hall at Fox.

**QUESTION:** Secretary, Sheikh Al-Thani, thank you. This week, the UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a key U.S. ally, met in Damascus with the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. The UAE is just one of a few U.S. allies starting to normalize relations with Syria, but shouldn't the administration here be doing more to discourage allies from building relationships with this brutal regime? And if indeed you did discourage them, what does that say about the relationship with the UAE that your ally was not listening to you on that subject?

It also emerged this week, Secretary, that for the first time there are dozens of family members of American troops stuck in Afghanistan. How is that? Why was this not known beforehand? How many are abandoned there? And how much concern is it that there are family members of U.S. troops stuck in Afghanistan at a time when the Taliban is looking for anyone who was working with or indeed related to U.S. interests?

And also one question on Ethiopia, where the government has arrested some U.S. nationals as part of its anti-Tigrayan crackdown, and they're threatening to punish Ethiopian staff working for the UN and for the African Union for law breaking. Are you concerned about these arrests of Tigrayans, and is civil war in Ethiopia, in your opinion, inevitable?

And Sheiki Al-Thani, what do you make of the UAE foreign minister's visit to Syria? Do you think it is right that countries should be normalizing relations with that country? And also, why has Qatar felt the need to limit Afghans transiting through Doha by requiring them to have passports that the Taliban won't issue at a time when a humanitarian crisis, as you say, is looming? And I wondered if you could clarify also your relationship with Iran, your neighbor across the Gulf? Are they ally? Are they adversary? And have you discussed this with the U.S.? Where do they stand on your relationship? Thank you.

**SECRETARY BLINKEN:** Excellent demonstration of the multi-part question. (Laughter.) Thank you. So on Syria, I have to tell you we're concerned about the signals that some of these visits and engagements are sending. And I would simply urge all of our partners to remember the crimes that the Assad regime has committed and indeed continues to commit. We don't support normalization, and again, we would emphasize to our friends and partners to consider the signals that they're sending.

We – when it comes to Afghanistan and the second question, we've been taking out Afghan families of U.S. service members all along, and that will continue. And as we identify people who are in Afghanistan, including family members of service members who remain there and wish to leave, we will do everything we can to get them out.

And again, I would just step back for a moment, if I could here, because this is in so many ways a complicated story that I'm not sure the American people fully understood. Just taking American citizens for example, as you know, starting back in March of this year, well before the President made the decision to end the war, and certainly well before the government and security forces in Afghanistan imploded, so back in March we began to issue messages to all those we had identified as Americans in Afghanistan, encouraging them and then urging them to leave the country. And indeed, by the summer we were also offering to support them if they needed help, for example, in buying a plane ticket. The airport was functioning, and we were pressing the community that we had identified to leave.

Despite 19 messages between March and late July, there was still at the time everything imploded about 6,000 people in Afghanistan who had a blue passport, who had American citizenship. And as I've said before, there's a very good and understandable reason why despite everything roughly 6,000 people remained. And that's because for virtually all of these people, Afghanistan was their home. This is where they resided. This is where their families were, their extended families were, where they had made their lives. And making that incredibly wrenching decision to leave, to give up everything you know, is incredibly hard and difficult. So that's why there were still roughly 6,000 remaining despite everything, despite our efforts to encourage anyone who had American citizens and wanted to leave to take advantage of that.

Of those 6,000 virtually all of them were evacuated during the couple of weeks of the evacuation, but there were still some hundreds who, for one reason or another, were not able to get to the airport or get on a flight. And what I committed to the American people, and more important what President Biden committed to the American people, was to continue every effort we could to bring out any American citizen who wanted to leave beyond August 31st. There was no deadline to that mission.

And that's exactly what we've done. And as I said earlier, to date since the 31st, since the end of the evacuation mission, we have evacuated roughly 380 Americans. And as I mentioned earlier, as of the 10th of November, all U.S. citizens who have requested assistance from the United States Government to depart Afghanistan and who we've identified as prepared to depart and having the necessary documents have been given an opportunity to do so.

So this is an effort that will continue. It's also a picture that changes on a regular basis because what happens is this: Some people who have identified as Americans say nonetheless they don't want to leave because their families, extended families, are in Afghanistan and they want to continue to stay there. Others change their minds and have told us they don't want to leave and then decide that they do want to leave, so that number changes as well. And still others since August 31st have come forward to identify themselves as Americans.

So we are going to continue this effort for as long as people want to leave. But as I've said, we made a commitment. We're making good on that commitment. And that, of course, extends to the family members of U.S. servicemembers who remain.

Finally, Ethiopia. I am very concerned about the potential for Ethiopia to implode given what we are seeing both in Tigray but also as we have different forces and different ethnic groups that are increasingly at odds. And we are working very closely to support the efforts of the former Nigerian President Obasanjo to mediate a way forward with all the Ethiopian parties.

We're in extremely regular and close contact with him. We have a special envoy, Ambassador Jeff Feltman, who is deeply engaged in this. Other key players in the region are very much engaged.

And I think as each of the different groups is looking at this, there are two paths forward. One path forward is out and out conflict, which could lead to the implosion of Ethiopia and spill over into other countries in the region, and that would be disastrous for the Ethiopian people and also for countries in the region. The other path is to halt all of the military actions that are currently underway, to sit down to negotiate a real ceasefire, to make sure that humanitarian assistance can get in to all of the regions where people are in need – Tigray, of course, but also people in Amhara, the Oromos, others – and ultimately to negotiate a durable political resolution to the differences that have emerged over the last year. I believe that that is still not only possible but necessary, and I can tell you the United States is working very hard to support all of the efforts that are trying to move Ethiopia in that direction.

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AL-THANI:** Well, first for regarding your question about normalizing with Syria, Qatar position has been very clear. We see that normalizing with Assad regime is not a step that we are thinking of or considering right now, and we believe that all the crimes he has committed against his own people he needs to be held accountable. But also we support the political resolution and political transition over there in a peaceful way with the support of the Security Council Resolution 2254.

Regarding other countries in the region trying to re-engage and reintegrate Syria, it's, of course, they are making their decisions based on their own assessments and their own concern, and this is their sovereign right. We cannot criticize. It will be a wishful thinking to have all the countries in the regions united when it comes to the issue of Syria, and we hope that countries will be discouraged from taking further steps with the Syrian regime in order not to undermine the misery of the Syrian people who are – what they are under, what they are living in right now.

Qatar position will remain as it is. We don't see any serious steps by Assad regime showing his commitment to repair the damage that he made for his own country and for his own people. And as long as he's not taking any serious step, we think that changing the position is not a viable option.

Regarding the issue of Afghanistan evacuation and people who are not holding passport, I think from our perspective and from all other countries' perspective, it's very important to make sure that the right people are evacuated. And those people will be checked and vetted from a security point of view, and this is – cannot be cleared unless we have proper and sufficient documentation for that. So it's mainly a security measure that's being taken, but there are exceptions. If we can get the vetting process done in the right way, then we are

accepting some without their passport at the condition that they provide the required documents. But we don't want to end up with the wrong people who are leaving Afghanistan to our countries and going to other countries and then doing something wrong and we will be then responsible for such a thing.

Regarding our relation with Iran, when you talk about the region relation with Iran, it's different. It has different basis and different dynamics. Iran is our neighbor. Iran is a country that we need to maintain a good neighborhood relationship with them, and this relationship has never been at the account of our alliance with the U.S. or our relation with other countries. We use this relationship as a good way to engage, to communicate, to facilitate if there are any needs from our allies here in the U.S. that we can support with Iran, and we encourage them – we encourage Iran and the U.S. to come back to the JCPOA as soon as possible and not to escalate.

A relationship, sometimes it means that it's agreement and disagreement. It's not only an agreement on everything. But we disagree with Iran in policies in the region, different policies in the region, but it doesn't mean that we are not engaging with them. We are talking to them, trying to understand each other, trying to narrowing the gap, and trying to bring more stability to our region. It's not in anyone interest, neither Qatar nor our neighbors in the GCC or the United States, to have an unstable region, and we don't want to see a nuclear race. So we see that the nuclear issue is a very eminent issue that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY ALLEN:** Thank you, everybody. Thank you, everybody.

[i] It will be the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations